

GUNNERS WHO DESTROYED 'ZEP' GET BIG PRIZES

Eye Witness Tells How Air Duel Was Waged.

French Shoot Down Dirigible, 5,000 Feet in Air.

MODERN WAR WEAPONS VIE

Five Autos With Searchlights and Guns Pursue.

Raider's Bombs Explode, Killing Crew of 22 Men.

Paris, Feb. 23.—An eyewitness of the destruction of Zeppelin L. Z. 77 by French gunners on Monday near Reims, a town nine miles north-west of La-De-Lie, gives a vivid description of the dramatic exploit.

Two Zeppelins were sighted at 10:20 o'clock at night by an artillery officer in a listening post. The night was clear and the wind moderate. The officer heard the noise of their engines and telephoned to the battery base, when the news was forwarded to the army corps headquarters.

All the batteries of the district were at once on the alert and within five minutes about 200 searchlights swept the heavens in all directions.

The Zeppelins were first sighted by an officer commanding a battery of 75 searchlights. The nearest Zeppelin was then about two miles off, flying at an altitude of about 5,000 feet and rising rapidly.

The second Zeppelin was some three miles behind the first. The officer was unable to get the elevation necessary to hit the airship but he managed to give the exact position to the searchlight officers. From that moment until it was destroyed the dirigible was under constant attack.

The searchlights never left it. As it was moving against the wind its progress was relatively slow.

Five Autos in Pursuit.

As soon as the warning reached Reims, five automobiles with searchlights and with special anti-aircraft guns, hurried to the scene.

A shell which is expressly designed to explode on contact with the aluminum painted covering of the Zeppelins and to burst into flames once it is exploded.

As the car rushes along the road the officer stands on the back of the car gives the range and directs the fire of the gun by the crew which work the gun lying on the flat of the Zeppelins.

The aim on the moving automobiles opened fire as soon as they came within range.

The Zeppelin throwing it into wrong relief and immediately the gunners seized their opportunity.

As the shell passed over the target but the next of the inflammable zone hit the mark squarely about 75 feet from the stern.

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The state's investigation already is under way but in as much as the rear-end collision was the important witnesses, were killed it will be difficult to fix the responsibility.

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